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What life-giving power the vigorous, thoroughly German atmosphere of Goethe's Strassburg surroundings had! How much more stimulating than the semi-French character of his environment in Leipzig!

The statement regarding Behrisch, on the same page, proves misleading to students who learn of him for the first time. Nor did Goethe decide to destroy most of what he had previously written by reason of Behrisch's suggestion, but rather because of the discouraged state of mind in which he was by reason of adverse Leipzig criticism in general.

Selection 7 (p. 178). In enumerating the chief Strassburg influences, the essentially German atmosphere should certainly not be omitted. The three great shaping influences were Herder, Friederike Brion and the Germanizing element there encountered.

Selection 20 (p. 188). It might be well, when commenting upon Basedow and Lavater, to refer the student to the biographical list found in the back of the book.

Selection 23 (p. 191): "the fourth (stanza) has to do with communion with nature." Has it not rather to do with a longing for universality of life-experience?

Selection 34 (p. 198). The note on Frau von Stein seems unwise for pupils who here become acquainted with her for the first time. A simple statement of facts would be far preferable.

Selection 35 (p. 199): *reinste Nerve* needs either translation or explanation.

Selection 43 (p. 206). The following statement in regard to the question of unity of *An den Mond* would seem to be an exaggeration: "The transitions in thought . . . are totally without justification in anything that goes before them." The thought of the poem is somewhat as follows.—The poet wanders forth for a stroll in the moonlight in quest of peace of soul. As the lovely light of the moon rests upon him, he does not forget that in a similar manner there rest upon his career the gentle glances of a loving friend.—Lines seven and eight must be noticed, as they pave the way for the otherwise wholly abrupt close of the poem.—As he hears the Ilm across the meadows he is reminded of days of former love now passed: he also prays the stream to

whisper new melodies to his poetic ear. Then his mind reverts to the thought of friendship and its inestimable blessings. Thus interpreted the poem possesses some degree of unity—more is not claimed for it.

Selection 55 (p. 212). It will hardly be possible for a majority of Goethe-students to agree with the statement: "It is difficult to believe that Goethe's presence at Weimar made any essential difference in the fortunes of the little duchy."

Selection 68 (p. 221). The "conclusion" should be: *Let each one then look to himself*, rather than that "men are not alike."

Selection 71 (p. 223). Goethe's maxims are somewhat underrated. Goethe was pre-eminently a sage whose good fortune it was also to be a poet. Thus it happens that frequently bits of great practical wisdom are met with in his maxims. It is easily possible to do full justice to Goethe the poet, and at the same time admire many of his proverbs.

Selection 91 (p. 237). *Die Meile* is nearer four and a-half than five English miles (4.62).

The above are the chief defects noticed. Compared with the many excellencies of the notes in general they are few indeed. Some readers will wish that the selection of poems had been made longer. A hundred more pages would increase the value of the book materially. A helpful biographical list of six pages and an index of first lines complete this excellent little volume.

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COMPARATIVE LITERATURE.

Der heimkehrende Gatte und sein Weib in der Weltliteratur. Litteraturhistorische Abhandlung von W. SPLETTÖSSER. Berlin: Meyer und Müller, 1899.

It is to be regretted that the author of the present dissertation did not restrict his investigations to the Volkslied, the form of literature with which he seems to have the widest acquaintance. His quotations range from Russian popular songs to Portuguese romances, from Serbian Volkslieder to Scottish ballads. All this is good as far as it goes, but it does not go very far. A really thorough investiga-

tion into the occurrence of the "returning husband" motive in the primitive ballad literature of Europe would have had great value for the student of comparative literature and would alone have sufficed to fill a volume. Instead, however, of confining himself to one field, Dr. Spletstösser professes to trace his motive through the "Weltliteratur," which means, as far as modern literature is concerned, that he picks out two or three isolated examples, such as Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*, Maupassant's *Le Retour*, Houwald's *Heimkehr*. This does not satisfy even the modest claims he himself makes for his essay: "So will denn vorliegende Abhandlung keine Vollständigkeit erzielt, wohl aber nach Möglichkeit angestrebt haben." Had Dr. Spletstösser looked more carefully into the German "Schicksalsdrama," or the modern French novel, he would have found at least a dozen examples for every one he quotes. At the best, however, little is gained by investigations of this kind unless they are confined strictly to primitive forms of literature, and the most that can be said for Dr. Spletstösser's essay is that he has made a beginning for such an investigation. But here also there are too many omissions. Was, for instance, the rich ballad literature of Denmark not worth an examination? And surely it is a little perverse to devote pages of discussion to *canti popolari* in remote Italian dialects, and to neglect such obvious sources as the German popular sagas. Even so familiar a collection as the Grimms' *Fairy Tales*, not to speak of their *Deutsche Sagen*, would have furnished an example or two. Dr. Spletstösser also seems to me unnecessarily diffuse in defining his motive; he discusses not only the returning husband in all possible forms, but also the returning lover, a motive which surely belongs to a different category. Here, again, a greater limitation would have been a gain. On the whole, the essay is not without interest, but too incomplete to have much scientific value.

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THE DIPHTHONG *oi* IN NEW ENGLAND.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES,

SIRS:—In one of the last articles written by Prof. W. D. Whitney ("Examples of sporadic

and partial phonetic change in English, *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 4, 32), he supported Prof. Tarbell's strictures upon the dogma of the invariability of phonetic change in language (*Trans. Amer. Phil. Assoc.*, 1886, p. 1) by further developing one of Prof. Tarbell's illustrations—that of the sporadic shortening of a long *o* to a real short *o* in New England. Another interesting illustration of this is afforded by a phonetic change, interesting in itself, which apparently must have been making its way for some time in New England, though not, so far as I can ascertain, noted in print, and quite novel to me in spite of Yankee birth and frequent visits to various parts of New England.

A Bostonian used the phrase "loin of veal" recently in my hearing, pronouncing *loin* as a disyllable—*lō in*, with *o* as in *lo*, *i* as in *oin*. The possibility that this was an eye-reading of a word by some strange chance unfamiliar was disposed of by the fact that the word *coin*, given in a sentence for the purpose, was similarly pronounced, but not so markedly. I set the pronunciation down as an individualism until a week or two later, when I heard a native of Concord, twice the age of the person first spoken of, pronounce the word *soil* in the same way that *loin* had been pronounced, only if possible more so, with an *o* so close and so carefully rounded, as to suggest, when its tension was relaxed, an incipient *w* in the hiatus before the *i*. Of three other Bostonians, two pronounced these and similar words in this way. The diphthongs remained clear in *sir-loin* and *tenderloin*. All are persons of education, but so circumstanced that their native habits of speech are not likely to be disturbed by foreign influences.

The converse phenomenon is noticeable in my own speech and that of other New Englanders. I naturally pronounce *poet*, *poi et*, and *poetry*, *poi etry*, and tend when speaking unsophisticatedly to pronounce *going*, *goi ing*, a form, which, as Dr. C. P. G. Scott suggests to me, may be equated with forms which preceded and led to Somerset *gwaa-yn*, pronounced with the diphthong *a-i* (cf. Elworthy, *West Somerset words*, s. v. *gwain*), and to Negro *gwine*.

As bearing upon the matter of the inception of sound changes sporadically in particular words of a group, it seems possible it might be worth the while of some one having the oppor-